

# RIO DELL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT ANNEXATION PLAN OF SERVICE

## SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED

56653 (b) (1) An enumeration and description of the services to be extended to the affected territory.

56653 (b) (3) An indication of when those services can feasibly be extended to the affected territory.

The Rio Dell FPD provides fire protection services, as enumerated in California Health and Safety Code Section 13862 "a" through "f", excluding "e" (ambulance services): fire protection services; rescue services; emergency medical services; hazardous material emergency response services; and any other services relating to the protection of lives and property. Fire protection services would continue to be provided throughout the entire annexation area in generally the same manner that they are currently provided.

The Rio Dell FPD has provided fire protection services to its out-of-district response area and the Scotia, Redcrest and Shively Volunteer Fire Companies have provided service to their communities for many years. The Rio Dell Fire Protection District (FPD) proposes to annex a portion of its existing out-of-district service area and consolidate operations with the Scotia, Redcrest and Shively Volunteer Fire Companies, and annex the service areas of those volunteer fire companies into the boundaries of the Rio Dell FPD. The proposed annexation would establish district boundaries that clearly define service responsibilities for the benefit of neighboring fire service providers, land use authorizes, the public, and other service providers.

The Scotia, Redcrest and Shively Volunteer Fire Companies are not supported by a sustainable or reliable source of ongoing revenue to support the provision of fire protection services. The proposed annexation would extend the Rio Dell FPD's current property tax allocation and special assessment revenue sources to the expanded district boundary and consolidate fire protection service operations and administration with the Scotia, Redcrest and Shively Volunteer Fire Companies, providing regular and ongoing revenue sources to these communities to sustain local fire protection services within each community and to also retain the important local identity of each community's fire department. The annexation and consolidation would support essential fire protection services to the following communities: the Town of Scotia; Stafford; Shively; Redcrest; Larabee; Pepperwood; Holmes Flat; and Price Creek/Howe Creek.

The proposed annexation would officially merge the operations of the four fire departments into one efficient, effective, and sustainable emergency services system and make possible a proactive, sustainable solution for future fire and emergency service needs for the area by creating a regional district, with an improved economy of scale and associated benefits.

## SERVICE UNITS AND CAPACITY

56653 (b) (2) The level and range of those services.

Similar to a portion of the existing Rio Dell FPD boundaries, the proposed annexation area contains urbanized and rural areas. The Rio Dell FPD provides a level of service consistent with the characteristics of the area that it protects: urban level of service in and around the City of Rio Dell and rural levels of service in the remote areas of the District due to water availability, extended response times, and terrain. The Rio Dell FPD would provide a level of service consistent with the characteristics of the annexation area: maintain an urban level of service in Scotia where adequate water pressure and flow is available for structural fire protection and most development is within a distance of ¾ miles from the fire station, and a rural level of service within the remainder of the annexation area due to water availability, extended response times, and terrain.

## **PROPOSED SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE**

56653 (b) (4) An indication of any improvement or upgrading of structures, roads, sewer or water facilities, or other conditions the local agency would impose or require within the affected territory if the change of organization or reorganization is completed.

Rio Dell FPD annexation and consolidation with the Scotia, Redcrest and Shively Volunteer Fire Companies does not include development of any sort. In the last several years, the Redcrest Volunteer Fire Company received funding through the Humboldt County Fire Chief's Association for grant funds from the Humboldt Public Safety/Essential Services Sales Tax revenue for funding to construct a fire stations. The Redcrest Volunteer Fire Company is in the process of constructing a fire station at the Redcrest Community Center. The construction of the Redcrest Fire Station will likely be complete about the time that the Rio Dell FPD annexation is certified as complete. The Shively Fire Company would like to construct a fire station in Shively using the same funds, but does not yet have a site secured for the station or full project funding. These two fire station projects have been ongoing for many years and are not associated with, or contingent upon, the Rio Dell FPD annexation and consolidation.

## **FINANCING OF SERVICES**

56653 (b) (5) Information with respect to how those services will be financed.

Scotia, Redcrest and Shively Volunteer Fire Companies are not supported by a sustainable or reliable source of ongoing revenue to support the provision of fire protection services. The proposed annexation would extend the Rio Dell FPD's current property tax allocation and special assessment revenue sources to the expanded district boundary and consolidate fire protection service operations and administration with the Scotia, Redcrest and Shively Volunteer Fire Companies, providing regular and ongoing revenue sources to these communities to sustain local fire protection services within each community and to also retain the important local identity of each community's fire department. The annexation and consolidation would support essential fire protection services to the following communities: the Town of Scotia; Stafford; Shively; Redcrest; Larabee; Pepperwood; Holmes Flat; and Price Creek/Howe Creek.

The proposed annexation would officially merge the operations of the four fire departments into one efficient, effective, and sustainable emergency services system and make possible a proactive, sustainable solution for future fire and emergency service needs for the area by creating a regional district, with an improved economy of scale and associated benefits.

## CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

The proposed action(s) will be subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. On April 9, 2019, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors approved a policy providing for the transfer of property tax revenue to fire-related districts who annex their out of district response area and seek to consolidate with neighboring fire departments, as well as meet other requirements. The Rio Dell FPD requests that the proposed change of organization be subject to the approval of an agreement with the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors regarding the exchange of ad valorem property tax pursuant to tax exchange agreement Offer Number 1; and
2. Require that the existing Rio Dell Fire Protection District special assessment be extended to all property within the proposed annexation area.

## ORGANIZATION ALTERNATIVES TO BE CONSIDERED

The Rio Dell PFD has been interested in annexing it's of the out of district service area for the last 10 to 15 years. The annexation was not considered feasibility by the District Board because of the unwillingness of the County of Humboldt to share property tax revenue. The annexation of Scotia and Redcrest and the consolidation with the Scotia and Redcrest VFCs was also explored during the same time period, but was not pursued due to the lack of property tax revenue and the formation of the Scotia Community Services District to support the Scotia VFC. The policy regarding the sharing of property tax revenue and additional encouragements to merge with surrounding fire departments has made the annexation/consolidation feasible and beneficial to all parties.

The following is a brief discussion of each of the organization alternatives considered over the last 10 to 15 years and why the recommended organizational option provides the most beneficial outcome.

New County CSA. The formation of a County Service Area (CSA), where the County would be responsible for fire protection services and could hire staff or contract with the CAL FIRE, Rio Dell FPD, Scotia VFC or Redcrest VFC, or an adjacent fire department to provide the service, such as the Ferndale FPD. Formation of a new CSA is not a viable options because Humboldt County has not indicated a strong desire to establish additional CSA's for fire protection and has expressed concern about contracting with multiple service providers

Annexation by Another FPD. There are no adjacent existing fire protection districts that could provide the same level of fire protection services to the entire annexation area due to proximity of other district's fire stations. The Ferndale FPD has considered annexing it's out of district service area, which abuts the Rio Dell FPD out of district service area. The Ferndale FPD Board of Directors has met to consider the proposed Rio Dell FPD annexation and adopted a resolution of support. The Ferndale FPD could annex a greater area than they are currently proposing; however the Rio Dell FPD has provided service to the proposed annexation for many years and the boundaries of the proposed annexation area were developed in close consultation with the Ferndale FPD. There are no fire protection districts south of the existing Rio Dell FPD boundary that are proximate to the annexation area. Therefore, annexation by other districts would result in a lower level of service.

Formation of New Fire Protection Districts. The Scotia CSD is currently authorized to provide fire protection services but has been unable to do so due the failure to pass a financing mechanism to support the service. The Scotia CSD has not expressed a desire to again try to seek voter or landowner approval of an initiative to fund fire protection services and would therefore be expected to support the proposed annexation. Formation of a Scotia fire protection district would not be appropriate as it would create an additional and overlapping board of directors and would require the establishment of a financing mechanism to support the service that has been unsuccessful in the past.

The Redcrest VFC has considered forming as fire protection district and the Redcrest and Shively VFCs have participated in organizational and feasibility planning for a merged fire district including all fire departments along the Avenue of the Giants. The Avenue of the Giants working group has not met in several years and Redcrest and Shively VFCs have begun to work closely with the Rio Dell FPD and other Eel River Valley fire departments on things such as improved training. It may be possible for the Redcrest and Shively VFCs to form as separate or combined fire protection districts; however, the population of these areas is small, which results in a limited number of potential volunteers and a limited pool of registered voters for an elected board of directors. The merger of the Rio Dell, Scotia, Redcrest, and Shively fire departments would provide automatic backup for calls for service within the annexation area when volunteer turn out is low or when volunteers are at work. The merger would also eliminate the organizational, administrative, and operational redundancy that would be caused by the formation of up to three new fire protection districts.